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ABSTRACT

Scholastic journalism studies are almost entirely limited to students' First Amendment rights; principals' and teachers' knowledge of, or attitudes toward, scholastic journalism (including why they think students should work on publications); publication content and design analyses; trends in female and minority staffers; publications' finances; and newspapers' use in teaching English or for school public relations. Drawing on extensive existing literature, this paper is the first known work focusing on why students have worked for and/or read student newspapers. Findings suggest that student newspapers' place in twentieth-century youth culture requires more research. (Contains 110 references.) (Author/NKA)

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High School Student Newspapers in U.S. Youth Culture: From Gossip to Politics to Social Issues; From Vocational Education to School PR Tool, to Forum for Expression and Back Again

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High School Student Newspapers in U.S. Youth Culture: From Gossip to Politics to Social Issues; From Vocational Education to PR Tool, to Forum for Expression and Back Again

Abstract

Scholastic journalism studies are almost entirely limited to students' First Amendment rights; principals' and teachers' knowledge of, or attitudes toward, scholastic journalism (including why *they* think students should work on publications); publication content and design analyses; trends in female and minority staffers; publications' finances; and newspapers' use in teaching English or for school PR. Drawing on extensive existing literature, this is first known work focusing on *why students have worked for and/or read* student newspapers.

High School Student Newspapers in Youth Culture

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1969 in *Tinker* v. *Des Moines Community School District* that students did not give up their First Amendment rights by entering the schoolhouse door, one result was that high school newspapers could not be censored by advisers or by principals. The decision sent shock waves through the country for at least two major reasons; in moderate to conservative communities, students were seen as subordinate in every way, free expression was seen as disruptive, and no higher goals could be found in their schools than order, discipline, and administrative efforts to enforce "cohesiveness" and "unity" in schools. Second, in most schools, the student newspaper had a long history as a site of vocational education, practical application of English skills, public relations efforts by administrators, and students looking for a elite social clique, an "easy grade," or a class that didn't involve reading textbooks and taking exams while confined to a desk. In sum, the idea of the student newspaper as a primary means for free student expression -- or even journalism -- was, in many school districts, secondary, among students as well as teachers, parents and administrators. One irony is that at the same time students obtained more First Amendment rights in the early 1970s, the number of students working on official student papers declined -- even in the overwhelming number of high schools that had no new underground paper; students perceived the paper as part of the "establishment" and dropped it along with many other co-curricular or extracurricular activities. Another irony is that many students didn't know their rights or often didn't want to take advantage of them when they did. Today, most teenagers have a job, but are unwilling to professionalize their own publications -- at least beyond computer-aided design and layout.

This paper is not an institutional history of student newspapers, nor a legal history of scholastic journalism, but instead the first attempt ever to consider student papers as part of 20th century U.S. youth culture. What did high school newspapers mean to *students*, not *teachers* or *administrators* or *parents*? As we shall see, adults, including university professors, have never had much interest in what students wanted or said they obtained from school paper work, so that question's answer depends mostly on circumstantial evidence.

1900-1919. Although secondary school magazines of one kind or another have been traced in the United States back to the 18th century, the modern high school newspaper has been traced back to the late 19th century, with such newspapers as the Decatur (Ill.) H.S. Observer, founded in 1892, and the Rockford (Ill.) H.S. Owl, founded about the same time. Prior to 1915, in fact, most major publications in high schools were in magazine form (Goodwin, 1937, p. 7) , and scholars generally agree that magazines and many student newspapers were primarily an adjunct to the English course, used primarily to encourage and train students interested in writing -- even in schools in which other students were learning printing trades by producing the publications in-house.

It was during 1910s that the magazine declined in popularity and the newspaper increased -- for many reasons. Franklin (1948, p. 2) wrote that, "When school authorities began to recognize that the school paper was an excellent medium through which school spirit could be built and community recognition of the school could be fostered, scholastic journalism began to imitate professional journalism, and the second stage was reached. This was characterized by the inverted pyramid type news story and long, dull, weighty editorials. Spontenaety, originality and zest were lacking, and there was little, if any, creative effort." But many forces were shaping and pressuring the development of student newspapers. Increasing numbers of young people were attending high school, and preparing high school students to go directly into the job force became a growing priority. The country's first scholastic journalism course was taught in 1912 by English teacher Cora Colbee in Salina, Kan. (Scott, 1960); previously, students had produced publications but not taken a journalism course. (At the time, almost all newspaper reporters had only a high school education, although a surprisingly high number of editors had a college degree.) More students in high school meant more students in college, and increasing numbers of colleges were offering journalism courses and even journalism majors; Washington College, later Washington & Lee University, had offered a course within a few years after the Civil War, and the University of Missouri started the first journalism school in 1908. Dillon (1918) wrote his textbook on high school journalism to help high school students decide whether they wanted to major in journalism in college, which, in turn, would help them decide whether to pursue journalism as a career.

High School Student Newspapers in Youth Culture

Although copies of high school newspapers from the World War I era survive, almost no helpful research on student newspapers was conducted before the late 1920s. Thus, answering questions such as why students worked on student newspapers, or what other students read in them, must be done primarily by reading between the lines of textbooks of the period and later histories. Dillon's 1918 (p. 1) textbook, for instance, asserted that the primary goal of students newspapers should be to give students writing practice. This is stated from a teacher's or parent's point of view, but Dillon acknowledged students' nature, writing that faculty advisors' editing ("censorship" here) means "eliminating of attacks on those who have no chance to defend themselves; insinuations likely to injure the good reputation of boy or girl; 'getting even' with some member of the board or faculty whose idea of duty has made him unpopular; caricatures that wound; jokes that leave a sting; slang that reflects unfavorably on the intelligence of writers, and, in short, every form of coarse, questionable wit or sarcasm resorted to by persons who seize eagerly an opportunity to injure others anonymously" (p. 3). Moreover, "What appeals to a high-school student as a particularly-attractive story very frequently belongs in the waste basket" (p. 63). As we shall see, adults' notions that high school students were irresponsible -- defined largely by their supposedly persistent preference for "gossip columns" -- would be an often-heard refrain well into the 1960s.

Dillon -- reflecting a bit of John Dewey, a bit of community establishment interests, and much sentiment (by diverting student journalists to matters outside the school -- and innocuous ones at that) that little of what happened in schools actually concerned the student newspaper -- volunteered what he thought were acceptable ideas for "special articles" (today's feature stories), which included such exciting stories as, "Studying at Night," "The Importance of Shaving and Shining," and "The Value of Latin" (pp. 67-68). If these types of stories were presented to students as "professional," it is no wonder that many students preferred to keep the student newspaper "amateur." Dillon also thought the school paper should discourage students from quitting school:

> "The effort to hold all the boys and girls until they have been graduated should be one of the high purposes of the paper. The staff, but especially the managing editor, should consider it a pleasant duty to put the 'pep' into the everyday routine of the school so that the life will be interesting" (p. 91).

Once again, it seems unlikely that student newspaper staff members -- often the academic and/or

social elite of the school -- would feel much of an obligation to help stanch the drop-out rate, especially at a time at which more than half of all students dropped out.

In any case, by 1920, the role of the student newspaper already was diverse: simply an outlet for writing for some students; a social club for others wishing to trade in gossip; and a training ground for college or professional journalism and/or printing for yet others. These motivations for student journalists strengthened and persist until today, with the exception that few high schools still print their own newspapers. But what high school adminstrators wanted or thought they needed from the student newspaper would make the newspaper's role, and that of the students who worked on it, even more diverse and thus complex as time went on.

1920s. As the 1920s began, the second stage of scholastic journalism's development was emerging. The first university course on teaching journalism was offered by Grant Hyde (1922) at the University of Wisconsin in 1922, all but eight of the 48 states had schools that offered journalism courses by 1930; and regional and national organizations also were forming. The Columbia Scholastic Press Association, based at Columbia University, had its first annual convention in 1925, with 308 in attendance representing the 179 member schools. By 1929, CSPA had 545 members and 1,300 convention attendees, and in 1930, despite the beginning of the Depression, 694 members and 1,563 conventioners. Other such groups, such as the Midwest-oriented National Scholastic Press Association and Quill & Scroll (a students' version of Sigma Delta Chi--the Society of Professional Journalists), started about the same time, as did statewide organizations for newspapers and/or journalism teachers. Thus, working on the student newspaper also became an opportunity for students to win state, regional or national awards -- and most exciting for high school students -- the possible chance to travel out-of-town.

In 1924, Huff said the student newspapers' major purpose is the "development and display of good English," but as schools and society became more complicated, there obviously was more to the story. As the numbers of high school and college students, interest in mass media, interest in vocational education, and initiatives to "modernize" the high school (which included but were not limited to the "student activities movement" of the 1920s and 1930s [Fretwell, 1931; Hines, 1981])

all dramatically increased, the number of high school newspapers zoomed up. By the mid-1920s, about 10,400 student newspapers were being published nationwide (Johnson, 1926, p. 5). In these years following World War I, Huff (1924) asserted that the student paper was an "active force for democracy," although at least some students must have noted the irony that their papers' content was tightly controlled by the teacher/adviser, if not by an administrator or school board. And in the decade in which the president declared, "the business of America is business," Huff also noted the student newspaper's opportunity for "personal growth in self-control, business achievements, and executive ability" (p. 1). Again, it is unlikely that students joined the paper staff to learn "self-control," or that other students read the paper because its staffers were models of "business achievement."

But Fairbanks (1926) found that award-winning newspapers' advisers -- teachers who had significantly more first-hand knowledge of why students chose to work for the newspapers, of how the students benefitted from that work, and perhaps of what other students read in the newspaper -- contradicted Huff's and other textbooks. Teachers said students newspapers existed:

> "To disseminate news about school activities [17 votes]; To create school spirit [14]; To improve English and give practical experience to writing for print [5]; To serve as an outlet for the journalism class [5]; To furnish a worthwhile activity [4]; To let the parents and the public know what the high school is doing [3]; To maintain contact with alumni [3]; To give a limited number experience in executive ability [2]; To keep in touch with other schools [1]; and to establish a bond between students and faculty [1]."

Because, for many advisers, publishing good news that otherwise wouldn't be widely disseminated was the primary way "to create school spirit," we see in these results teachers who believed that the newspaper had a unique, serious (preventing students from publishing gossip was still a high priority [Farley, 1924]) and autonomous purpose separate from the journalism class, other student activities or the school's public and press relations efforts. And it is easy to see how students would have had roughly the same priorities as their advisers. Little did most of them know, however, how much emphasis administrators were about to give to goals that were of relatively low priority to advisers and students.

1930s. In institutional terms, scholastic journalism grew significantly in the 1930s. In 1930, the Columbia Scholastic Press Association had 694 members and convention attendance of 1,563; by

1939, those numbers were 1346 and 2,509, respectively, with continuous drops except in the depths of the Depression in 1932-34. But membership never dropped below 753 (1933) nor convention attendance below 1,315 (1934). By 1934, 55 master's theses had been written on scholastic journalism, the first one in 1922 (Redford, 1936). The first two doctoral dissertations on scholastic journalism were finished in 1939. Statistics alone, however, do tot tell the whole story. Articles in the NSPA's Scholastic Editor articles nearly every year demonstrate that high school journalism was not secure among extracurricular activities, let alone in the curriculum. And they also mask the struggle over papers as public relations tools.

Public relations as a profession traces its modern roots in the United States to the period around World War I. During 1911-12, for instance, the Men and Religion Forward Movement, managed by the international Y.M.C.A. headquarters in New York City, hired a staff of publicity agents both in New York City and in cities all over the United States where MRFM was to hold meetings. During the war, the U.S. government ran an extensive propaganda effort, and national PR campaigns also were run for women's suffrage and Prohibition. It should not be surprising, then, with the growth and complexity of public education that by 1927, McKown (p. 294) would write that the school newspaper could carry out a "continuous [public relations] campaign by the direct method, [creating] the permanent record." By the mid-1930s, the idea of school PR was better defined and the opportunities made more explicit. Maxwell and Kilzer (1936, p. 458), as well as a Chicago Public Schools PR handbook in 1938, noted that the student paper's publication frequency made it best-suited for the public's "continuous interpretation" of the school. Reeder (1937, p. 58) wrote that "School publications have come to rank among the most important agencies in the public relations program of the school," and similar sentiments were expressed by Reavis (1922); Lovejoy (1930); Hull and Corey (1932). The voices of students are rarely even glimpsed in these discussions, and when they are, the discussion is condescending. Grinnell (1937, pp. 169-170) cautioned that parental interest won't be high if the paper is "trivia and silly with canned jokes," and what parents wanted, said a 1929 survey (Farley pp. 16-17) of 5,000 in 13 cities, was news of "pupil progress and achievement," with "extracurricular activities" appearing last on the list at 13th. The 11

topics in between all concerned teachers, administrators, buildings, curriculum, budgets, etc., with the exception of the number three item, "Health of pupils."

Interestingly, a 1934 (Butcher) content analysis of 34 Kansas school papers showed that "educational news" accounted for only 1.3% of content, editorials received 5.18% of space, that only one paper carried a regular column on "school problems of local, state, or national importance," and that athletics recieved more coverage than all other extracurricular activities combined. Although Farley's survey and Butcher's content analysis used different measures, it would seem that perhaps building administrators -- let alone district administrators -- were not as effective at controlling school newspaper content as they might have liked, probably leaving much room for students' influence. Moreover, Pickett's 1935 survey of Texas principals on student newspapers' purposes had results similar to Fairbanks' 1926 survey of teachers/advisers:

> "Spread school spirit; 60; Give authentic school news, 57; Show school life, 57; Develop initiative, responsibility, cooperation, accuracy, and leadership, 57; Advertise the school, 55; Foster better English writing and expression, 52; Unifies the school, 52; Outlet for business, literary, and artistic talent, 47; Records history of school, 43; Project for journalism, 39; Fosters cordial relations among schools, 37; Molds and influences public opinion, 36; Helps choose a vocation, 27; Keeps record of alumni, 17; Project for printing, 10" (p. 12).

Pickett concluded that the school annual and magazine were "losing ground" (p. 1) to the school newspaper because the latter served a "real purpose." She also observed that, "The school newspaper has changed a great deal since [1928]. It has become an integral part of the high school program, rather than just an extra curricular activity."

This was clear no more so than in the NSPA's school newspaper manual, which attempted to keep happy advisers, their parents and their administrators, if not very obviously the students; newspapers were:

> "1. To provide an organ of information that will present all the news desired by those who are actively interested in the school -- the students, the teachers, the parents, the administration, and, to some extent, the graduates. 2. To provide an organ for the expression of student thought and to unify ideals and objectives. 3. To create a wholesome school spirit and to support the best traditions of the school. 4. To promote and encourage worthy school activities. 5. To encourage the ideals of true sportsmanship. 6. To promote scholarship -- the really useful school newspaper deals with more than superficial activities. 7. To provide an outlet for the best creative literary and artistic work of the school. 8. To provide training in useful and purposeful writing. 9. To create a desire for the best forms of journalism both in and out of school. 10. To provide an organ in which may be given general and special forms of information pertaining to the school and its media. 11. To record in permanent form the

> history of the school. 12. To promote cooperation between taxpayers and parents and the school and its students."

Among other points, one immediately notices the paper framed in intellectual, educational, and public relations terms, but not in terms of providing opportunities for teamwork and camraderie, leadership, learning new ideas or information that they specifically cannot learn anywhere else, political activism or simply having fun, although in time all of these would become major benefits of student newspaper work.

Naturally a certain amount of resistance emerged among students and advisers to the idea that their newspaper was nothing more than an official mouthpiece for administrators. Goodwin (1937), in his master's thesis, asserted that "There need be no semblance of censorship exerted here [by the adviser]" and that all copy should be written by students, even if amateurish (p. 16). Scholastic Editor published a principal's demands for only news content that is "constructive," "wholesome" and "good taste" in order to preserve "social control" (Morgan, 1932). But it also published stories about school administrators who were critical of a paper's assertiveness until the paper won awards (Handy, 1932); critical of papers that allowed themselves to become "administrative house organs" (Harris, 1933); advocating that student papers serve a "safety-valve function when some tense situation arises" (Flint, 1934); and showing survey results that parents and students had mostly different content interests (Beach, 1936), but not clearly indicating how to resolve this. Students' rankings were:

> "1. athletics; 2. jokes and humorous writings; 3. plays; 4. music; 5. Scholarship recognition; 6. daily class work; 7. social activities; 8. student clubs; 9. personal items; 10. debate; 11.5. courses of study; 11.5 teachers and school officers; 13. alumni; 14. junior high and grade school, and 15. school business management and finance."

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The period's papers suggest that where student and parent interests differed, as now, students' interests generally prevailed. For example, Pickett's 1935 study found that in Texas student newspapers, content could be divided into the following categories: Local Interests [school news not related

to athletics], 30.4%; Advertising, 16.7%; Athletics, 16.2%; Columns, 8.9%; Editorials, 7.9%; Humor, 6.4%; Cartoons, pictures, 4.6%; Features, 4.2%; Staff lists, 2.4%; Exchange lists, 1.4%; Alumni, 1.2%. And Starkey (1936) found that humor, the number two choice of students in Beach's study, occupied significantly higher percentages of space in some student papers, and that 67% of students wanted even more space devoted to it. In some student papers humor was "canned" -- liberally borrowed from other sources -- and in some papers was original -- and thus was sometimes funny, sometimes not so funny and often a backdoor way to publish the always-feared "gossip."

But if the lack of direct daily involvement by administrators in the newspaper was resulting in what principals believed was less than optimal content, they had other ways to indirectly implement their preferences: the most obvious one, of course, was controllling who was appointed as the newspaper's adviser and/or journalism course(s) teacher. The second was by making pointed comments to those advisers, if only occasionally. And the third was influencing which student was appointed as the paper's editor; in Pickett's 1935 Texas study, staff members were selected by a combination of election by the student body and appointed by the advisor and/or principal at 63 schools; appointed by the principal at 30; elected by the student body, 10; and selected from journalism class, 3. Criteria for selection included: "Only students with the right attitude toward the school organization and policies and who are dependable and honest," 70%; "Have a general, good record, maintain good scholarship," 62.8%; and "Have a special ability in the subject most akin to the work that they do on the paper," 56.1%. It is easy to see how being elected or appointed to the staff would have been an honor in some schools, and an indication that a student was (too?) closely aligned with the interests of principals and parents at others.

As the decade concluded, the economy was recovering, the courts were liberalizing, and schools continued to become more modern and more complex. Oiseth (1939) celebrated how popular scholastic journalism courses were, and other writers also generally were shifting their discussion from a defensive to a boasting posture. Students were becoming more free to do what they wanted within the constraints of quality goals; Franklin (1948), for instance, wrote of a shift away from boring journalism to using "short poems and 'punch' features" to "brighten the pages," "more

color and informality," and "brief, interesting and forceful" -- not preachy -- editorials. Yeager (1939) argued that their newspapers "should be designed primarily for and by students, expressing all activities of the school and all points of view," and that a student publication is the "voice of the student and interpretive of his needs, opinions, and activities" (p. 191). Thus, at least some papers were publishing articles -- both by subject and format -- that were of more interest to students. And then the United States entered World War II.

1940s. During World War II, domestic shortages of ink, paper and persons with journalism education or training (many high school and college journalism instructors worked for the federal government in public information capacities) caused some yearbooks to be published only every second year, and weekly student newspapers became monthly or even less frequent (Grubb, 1956). Idealistic articles such as "Student Newspapers in a Warring World" (Zander, 1941), published before the United States entered the war, gave way to articles such as "Don't Give Up that School Paper!" (Nielsen, 1943) when minds had been long distracted and supplies acutely short. And yet student journalism programs continued to find a foothold in schools that didn't previously have it; in 1940, CSPA had 1,350 members and 2,723 convention attendees; by 1949, the figures were 1,839 and 3,500 respectively, and in 1950, 2,063 and 3,210, respectively. Only one CSPA convention, in 1945, was cancelled during the war, and in 1949, its keynote speaker was then-Columbia University President Eisenhower (followed by U.S. President Truman in 1952).

Although student papers' involvement in the war effort was mostly limited to simply trying to be newsy to justify the supplies they used, and publishing articles promoting and defending the "American way," occasionally their role was more tangible. For instance, Hines (1981, p. 56) notes that, "The CSPA offered patriotic contests and acted as a clearinghouse on information; the government war efforts received more visibility with students"; the Buy-a-Bomber campaign of Feb. 15-19, 1943, raised $531,996.95 through student newspapers selling war stamps and bonds.

Other developments included a crop of young journalism professors (Campbell, English, Stratton, Casey, Merrill, and so on), many of them former scholastic journalism teachers, who launched much research on student papers, giving them more legitimacy among other professors

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and making possible benchmarks for teachers and administrators. In 1941, Campbell (p. 179) published results of an early, if not the first, effort to ask students how they had benefitted from working on newspapers. Although they were apparently self-selected, and wrote what they had obtained from school paper work (and not why they had originally become involved), the answers still shed rare light on the journalism students of the period:

> "'I like journalism because it is taught in an informal type of class -- democratic and friendly,' declares Bob Gill, Bakersfield, Calif. James Lownaster, Grosse Point, Mich., says 'we don't sit idly through 45 minutes of boredom'; Nina S. Smith, Rock Falls, Ill., notes that it 'does not become monotonous'; and Betty Berg, Benson High, Omaha, 'it does not follow a dull routine day after day.' Nor is it 'like a regular subject such as Latin or algebra,' avers James Dempsey, Austin High, Chicago, Ill. A Springfield Mass., student like it because it concerns 'something that is happening right now.'...
>
> "'Before I took journalism, I was just another student,' writes Sam Cohen, Central High, Omaha. Now, he adds, 'I have many friendly acquaintances, I know the faculty as I should, and I believe that I have become a better student. The experience of responsibility which I have attained in journalistic work I feel sure will be useful no matter what trade or profession I enter.'"

Certainly during the war, much emphasis had been put on the newspaper as a "morale builder" (Pullman, 1942) and as a medium that could greatly benefit from more photos (Sluzka, 1943) -- even if they used a lot of space or incurred additional expenses. Interest in school sports also accelerated after the war, going from about one-eighth of the typical paper's content to about one-sixth (Franklin, 1948). (The increase in photos and space for sports were, of course, at least partially related.) And the continued battle against "gossip" throughout the decade (Biggs, 1943; Kloss, 1947; Turnage 1949, among others) probably indicates that student interest in publishing such material was as high or higher than ever.

During, but also after the war, contrary to the enlightened attitudes that more advisers and students had right before the war, papers seemed to almost revert to the early 1930s, when students' interests were parochial, teachers and principals were conservative and PR oriented, and they all struggled to reach their own goals: a Milwaukee adviser (Hauer, 1944) gloated about her students' paper having given up most of their autonomy in exchange for the principal guaranteeing to given them "scoops." Ross (1945, p. 43) implied that student publications were produced as much for parents and other taxpayers as for students, and Douglas (1945, p. 532) cautioned that:

"Influence must be exercised to keep at a minimum the trivia and ultra-juvenile material and

> the abortive attempts at humor which give undesirable and false impressions of the life of the school, and to bring about the inclusion of such material as will [give] some idea of the character of the more important work of the school."

And Carter (1947, p. 3) complained that the typical paper was "Column after column, page upon page of unimaginative, nonoriginal, unliterary, and unjournalistic nonsense [that] dull the talents and sap the energy, time, and newsprint space of many school publication staffs" (p. 3).

But the debates were not simply about professionalism: the atmosphere in many schools was authoritarian, and sometimes even patriotic appeals were used to keep student journalists subordinate. Carter (1945) could simply have told students it was unprofessional to allow their own opinions into news stories; instead, he said, to do so would be like "writing a Nazi or a Fascist propaganda sheet." (One wonders if anyone told Carter that he sounded like the fascist!) Agnew (1947) argued that if students wanted to print anything that administrators didn't like, this indicated a failure of the school's journalism course(s), and Grafft (1951) wrote, "It is NOT the Students' Paper: It must be subject to direction of administration and advisers" (emphasis in original). As the decade concluded, Harvey (1949) reported most students having to be given multiple inducements to join and then stay on the newspaper staff; the "community and the P.T.A." exercising inordinate influence over some papers' content (p. 72); many administrators putting a low priority on the paper (p. 76); and even advisers who emphasized the "morale building and public relations" functions of the newspaper over news reporting or student expression.

1950s. High school journalism continued to mushroom in the 1950s, through new suburban schools, population growth, a mostly strong economy and emphasis on the practical. CSPA membership increased from 2,063 in 1950, to 2,947 in 1959, with convention attendance springing from 3,210 to 4,518, respectively. But newspaper content, as stereotypes of the 1950s might suggest, was by and large parochial and conservative; Wendt's 1952 content analysis of 144 issues of newspapers from 36 different Chicago high schools featured such startling news stories as, "Civic Air Patrol Offers Aviation Courses," or "Drivers' Tests Sponsored by Chicago Motor Club." The so-called feature stories Wendt found were even more "canned." She also spotted an even a higher percentage of sports news than in other studies (in fact, sports was the largest category as she di-

vided up newspapers' content):

> Advertisements: 11%; Alumni News: 1.6%; Athletics: 17%; Awards, Scholarships, and Contests, 6.1%; Class News, 6.9%; Club News, 2.2%; School Dances and Parties, 1%; Editorials, 5.2%; Local to International Significance, 4.8%; Exchange, .1%; Faculty, 2.4%; Features, 6%; Gossip, 5.2%; Humor, 2%; Inquiring Reporter, 1.7%; Letters to Editor, .6%; Library, .2%; Literary Attempts, 2.8%; Lunchroom, .1%; PTA, .8%; Plays, Assemblies, Concerts, 3.6%; Principal's Message, .4%; Publications, 1.2%; Reviews, 1.9%; ROTC, 2%; Special Weeks, 1.1%; Student Government, 1.6%; Student Personalities, 3.9%; Miscellaneous, 6.6% ["largely mechanical material, essential to the layout of a newspaper"].

Once again numbers do not tell the whole story. In 1956, Grubb noted that papers had shifted from from being faculty-dominated to being student-operated, but an apparently high level of agreement between students and their advisers on content made control less of an issue than it had been in the late 1930s or that it would be by the mid-1960s. In fact, the 1950s can perhaps be best summed up by Boyle's (1952) suggestion that student papers clearly promote "ideals of Christian and democratic living" (Boyle, p. 57-58, in McAnally, p. 3). It was, for example, in the status quo 1950s that SE published the first article defending gossip columns (Hopkins, 1953); that SE devoted a significant amount of space to articles about photography (ironically, photography articles about were seldom illustrated!) and to reprinting excellent photos (There's Need for Better, 1955) rather than substantive content issues; that the community PR function of student journalists went virtually challenged (Heffernan, 1955; Nelson, 1958; Razo, 1959; Campbell, 1959; Griggs, 1960); that fashion news was first considered appropriate in a student paper (Carlson, 1960); and censorship was almost never debated, at least in part because many students did not contest it. (The March 1959 issue of CSPA's School Press Review addressed censorship for the first time in 10 years [Hines, 1981, p. 93] and SE attention to censorship also was minimal during the 1950s).

It was during the 1950s that McAnally (1952) suggested papers provide "guidance" on "how boys and girls can adapt themselves to school life. Such counsel often may be more effective than that given in a formal course or by a stern disciplinarian" (McAnally, p. 3, quoting Campbell, p. 7). And it also was during the late 1940s to late 1950s when dozens of SE covers featured a boy and girl in romantic settings or poses; since the couples were not portrayed as co-workers, and papers were discouraged from covering dating and "steadies," the implications were obvious: conservative students could associate their papers with what the Right today calls "family values," while

the more randy students could associate their papers with finding a steady if not also spending time in the backseat at a drive-in movie. And in fact, if newspapers' content seemed conventional, conformist and conservative -- and thus much to most administrators' liking -- it wasn't because students were being actively prevented from practicing more aggressive journalism. Wendt's study convincingly demonstrated that students and their parents had substantially different preferences for student newspaper content, and that student interests -- especially sports news and the ever-battled "gossip" -- were prevailing (p. 41) and difficult to influence (p. 63).

Students who worked on student newspaper staffs admitted in 1952 (McAnally) that most of what they learned working on the paper were teamwork and leadership skills, knowledge about the school, with writing skills generally and journalism practices in particular, of secondary importance. Typical comments included, "To people who have done little work inside an organization, it teaches them that the organization must come before the individual but that the organization cannot function without the individual," and "I love to be in such an informal class where everyone is so friendly and helpful to the other staff members. The freedom we have had has inspired us to be better students in both scholastic work and conduct...." Preparation for college or professional journalism were not specifically identified by any student in McAnally's study.

As the decade concluded, Karner and Cordell (1959) suggested that the importance of a student newspaper in a high school depended primarily on each paper's history; if the paper has a reputation for being good, students will want to work on it, and vice versa; students' career interests or the idea of journalism as inherently important were not noted.

1960s. Although high school journalism, based on CSPA figures, continued to grow in the first half of the 1960s, membership peaked at 3,474 schools in 1965 and convention attendance at 5,734 persons in 1965. By all measures, student journalism should have continued to grow during the entire decade: the first Baby Boomers started high school in 1960 and 1961, and the decade was one of yet more expansion of vocational and college preparatory education, suburbans and school systems. (Arnold [1980] would show many years later that the larger the school, the more important students' believed the newspaper to be, and thus the years when Boomers were in high school

[roughly 1960 to 1982] should have been glory years for papers -- and in many ways they were.) But if the decade's first half was mostly a continuation of the 1950s, no one could have predicted the second half: students quitting or never joining staffs because they considered newspapers "too establishment" (Hines, p. 103), just as the Supreme Court conferred new rights in Tinker, and a few of the same or different students starting underground newspapers, which had more legal rights off-campus but dramatically fewer rights on campus.

By the early 1960s, the student paper's role as school public relations tool, social club for its staff, and site for socializing students into the docile status quo was entrenched. Benz and Dawson (1962) emphasized that student paper work built "character and personality desirable in good citizenship," made students better "consumer[s] of news," and played a key role in school spirit and public relations. They cautiously noted that, "Some principals do not consider high school students competent to co:nment upon school policy" (p. 29), without explicitly saying students should do so. Benz and Dawson, Claus (1961), and others called for higher standards to join the staff because, "This emphasis on selectivity is an automatic morale booster. Membership on the newspaper staff should mean something to the student. And the more important the newspaper is to the school, the greater will be the value of staff membership." Holland (1967) suggested that readership of student papers in conservative South Carolina could be improved if students' writing were "more interesting and effective" and if they knew how to write "novelty leads"; it apparently did not occur to Holland that any readership problem was more likely due to boring subject matter than bad writing.

Today we recognize that Benz and Dawson's most damning observation was, "The fact that so few boys join the newspaper staff[, which] may be related to the lack of status for newspaper activities in the high school. An obvious solution is improving that status. A conscious effort to recruit boys should be made" (p. 11). McClintock (1962) attributed the lack of male staffers to their preference for athletics, but of course not all boys were in athletics, and overwhelmingly male enrollment in college journalism programs at the time dispells any notion of men's lack of interest; clearly, high school newspapers had become understood as a "girls' activity," with all of the stigma that such a perception then entailed.

Student newspapers finally became more news and issue-oriented again by about 1965. Zuegner relaunched the anti-gossip effort in 1961; Rochon carefully advocated greater student press freedom in 1963; and in 1965, McClure opposed April Fool's issues while Bill Ward began contributing a series of articles on hard news, editorials, and other ways to professionalize papers. Wayne Brasler, John Reque, Fred Michener, C.J. Leabo and others also wrote important articles on covering the curriculum or student council. In 1966, Wesche asserted that newspapers provide students "an opportunity to develop their self-expressiveness," "opportunities for critical thinking," "educational opportunities," and an "excellent medium for providing news of school events and for advertising the school," among other benefits. At least some student papers began tackling more potentially controversial subjects. In 1968, Campbell wrote an article, and Brasler a specific, no-nonsense, series, about turning a mediocre paper into a prize-winning one. (SE, for its part, assembled that year what it thought was a feminist photo essay called "GIRLS! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!")

It is at this point in time, the late 1960s, that most essays on student newspapers' history wax sentimental, even romantic, about student journalism, discussing in turn first the *Tinker* decision and then underground student newspapers. Wall (1971), for instance, wrote that many undergrounds did not print "four-letter words generally associated with them," and instead

> "convey the teenagers' outrage at world events: the draft, Vietnam, law and order, racial discrimination, the lack of a Black studies program, student unrest, the political scene, and poverty. Other undergrounds concentrate on their own school -- curriculum, staff and administration, policies, and extracurricular programs."

I also am sympathetic with underground newspapers and, as a high school student myself in the late 1970s, bought used copies of How Old Will You be in 1984? Expressions of Student Outrage from the High School Free Press (Divoky, 1969) and Captive Voices: The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into High School Journalism (Nelson, 1974), and borrowed a copy of Our Time is Now: Notes from the high school underground (Birmingham, 1970) -- even if they already seemed more than a little dated.

But as significant as *Tinker* is (even after the *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* decision in 1988 largely reversed 19 years of students' First Amendment gains), or as exciting as underground papers might be for those of us who cherish freedom of expression and appreciate the

exuberance of youth, we must candidly admit that on a day-to-day basis, they were irrelevant to the overwhelming majority: Birmingham [1970] apparently knew of only 150 underground papers nationwide. And even in Southern California, only 10% of 167 high schools surveyed had underground newspapers during 1967-68, and only 13% of the others had ever had an underground newspaper (Feldman, 1969); 233 high schools didn't respond to the survey, and it seems reasonable to suspect that schools that had or had had an underground paper would be disproportionately overrepresented among respondents and underrepresented in nonrespondents. So one key point is that relatively few high schools ever had underground papers that appeared more than once or twice, and another is that in at least one school that had an underground paper, students liked and trusted the official student newspaper more (Wall, 1971, pp. 69-73). Feldman's claim that underground papers or the "threat" of same prompted principals to "grant more editorial freedom" to official student papers never was never verified, but his respondent advisers' prediction that underground papers are "just a passing fancy" surely has been.

Finally, few student journalists found their lives immediately changed by *Tinker* (Kowalski, 1973; Kraus, 1974); it would take years, additional court rulings, the formation of the Student Press Law Center, better-educated advisers, more moderate students and more liberal advisers in the 1970s before the student press would become freer in conservative suburbs and small towns all over America. And even then, "advisers continued to censor publications because they believed it was their duty to the school" and "direct censorship was causing student journalists to censor themselves" (Dvorak, 1988, p. 181). Herring (1974), for instance, found Texas student editors to be more interested in avoiding controversial stories and more willing to allow principals to censor than were either advisers or principals themselves -- apparently because editors were the least knowledgeable about their own rights. Ironically, by 1978, when the Youth Liberation Press published How to Start a High School Underground Newspaper, student interest in underground papers was dead, and the next development in student publishing was already unfolding: the launching of conservative "alternative" newspapers on college campuses.

1970. Thus, as the 1970s dawned, some student newspapers had become more responsive to stu-

dent interests and some less so -- but student interests were not always liberal nor administration interests (particularly those who wanted to abide by new law) always conservative. Clearly the situation varied from school to school, based on a wide variety of factors: the personalities of administrators, how knowledgeable and secure advisers were, whether a critical mass of activist students existed, and local racial, economic and political conditions. Commitment to scholastic journalism by principals and teachers and even by most students remained strong; the question was where student journalism would end up when everything settled down. CSPA membership is again a rough measure of the decade, as it started in 1970 at 2,872 schools, and went down, then up, then down, then up, arriving in 1980 at 3,280 in 1980 (convention attendance declined throughout, most likely because of high costs of attending a convention in New York City).

Brown (1973) reported that the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education recommended five individual steps for improving schools that directly or indirectly concerned school journalism: expanding career opportunities, the need for career education, opportunities for broadcast television, the importance of school newspapers, and the importance of social development through participation in school activities. But little evidence exists that schools placed a higher priority on scholastic journalism in the 1970s than they had previously; in fact, principals had incentive to cut publication funding and drop journalism courses if they believed that student papers were going to become perennial sources of irritation after *Tinker* and subsequent court decisions. And although its findings have been criticized (Bowen, 1976; Nyka, 1979), Nelson's book (1974) claimed to document how school administrators recently had increased their censorship activity.

Students, on the other hand, valued their school papers, but probably no more so than before. For instance, Ludwig (1975) surveyed 30 students each at 32 Arizona high schools:

> "Fifty-one percent of the responding students felt that high school newspapers are 'of a great deal of value to many,' while another 31 percent weren't ready to go that far but did admit that the papers are 'of some value to many including me.' There was a marked difference between the responses from the larger schools and the smaller ones. As a rule students in the AAA schools reside in metropolitan areas such as Phoenix and Tucson and so are offered a wider range of experiences thus making the school newspaper appear less important than it would to a student in a less sophisticated school. Even so, 40 percent of the large school students felt the paper was of great value and another 40 percent granted it was of some value to many. Additionally, of the 558 students surveyed only 14, or three percent, evaluated school newspapers as being of no value to anyone" (p. 8).

Students' increased attention to political and curriculum issues during the late 1960s and early 1970s did have several significant long-term impacts: One was that student papers forever were much more significant possible sources of either pride or irritation than ever before. Second, only a few high school newspapers still published gossip columns (Wahlert, 1979; she also found a continued increase in sports news). Third, and most signficant for students, was that even as students had eased away from mostly national, mostly political issues such as the Vietnam war, racism, police conduct, student marches and rallies, presidential elections, and Johnson's Great Society platform, they persisted in their efforts to write about more personal or local issues, such as contraceptives, sex education, student drinking, student drug use and abortion, and less divisive major issues such as the environment. Hines (citing Simpson) wrote that by 1980, student newspapers were reporting on the "disadvantaged, exposing in-school health hazards, and addressing such national issues as the draft" -- although the latter remained an issue only because of President Jimmy Carter's institution of Selective Service. Even so, cautious students and advisers often decided that the newspaper itself should not take a stand on these issues, which they felt would be better handled and less controversial if presented in twin "pro/con" formats. Since by the 1970s, students were often receiving more complete and/or more opinionated material on these topics from other media and even their teachers, student newspapers' treatments of them were more symbolic than substantive.

1980s-1990s. As the United States began drifting politically to the right in the late 1970s, the mood in many high schools -- particularly suburban and rural -- drifted the same way. Many parents, teachers and principals believed that liberal reforms in the 1970s had gone too far, or had been insincere, or were no longer needed, and no doubt some were pleased with the 1988 *Hazelwood* decision. But what has been particularly noteworthy about this period is not educators' politics, nor directly coping with *Hazelwood* in its aftermath, but in many ways the collapse of most structures that supported high school journalism and what this means for students.

The percentage of high school graduates starting college continued to increase, so that by the late 1990s, it was about 75%. And, as an adviser told Dodd (1982, p. 66),

> "Our students, from the time they are Freshmen, are constantly reminded that they are expected to go to 'good colleges.' They are often frightened that they will not be recommended

for a 'good college' if they step out of line or question the administration."

An editor told Adams (1984, p. 74),

> "The biggest problem with our newspaper is the lack of aggressive reporting and writing. Controversy is almost non-existent. Everyone is so afraid that the adviser or school board, principal, superintendent, teachers, etc., won't like it if their story raises a few eyebrows, that the staff tends to write 'nice' stories about 'nice' people with 'nice' ideas and 'nice' lives, etc. One solution is the fact that the most intelligent students and the best writers in the school are not on the staff. If more interest could be generated at the time applications are filled out, a better selection of people for the staff would result."

Even as student editors such as Claussen (1981) or Kotch (Death by Cheeseburger, p. 9) insisted that student newspapers could and should be more professional, many high school newspapers -- even those with bright, aware students working on them -- became or remained dull in terms of content as staffers exercised self-censorship (Dvorak, 1994, p. 301). This may be regrettable, but it seems a part of the times. Even college students in the 1990s were not particularly active in campus politics or policy; in many college towns, the only protest or demonstration has come in the form of resistance to police trying to clear out the downtown when the bars close, or shepherding concerts. (Detractors describe such phenomena as students rioting for their right to drink.)

In fact, often as significant resources were poured first into electronic typesetters and then computers, papers' appearances spectacularly improved while textual content lagged. Many students apparently have simply given up on published self-expression in school, and clearly many others are expressing themselves to fellow teenagers and others on-line -- finding print on paper unnecessary, archaic, and so on.

Blackmon and Broussard (1977) found that while principals and advisers generally knew of the *Tinker*-based series of court decisions favoring the student press, only about half of them agreed with them. Not surprisingly then, students and/or their advisers engaged in "self-censorship" so that administrators would not become involved; Wutka (1980), found that of 60 Michigan student newspapers, staff policies prohibited: criticizing teachers at 11, and discussing birth control at 6, abortions at 5, and "politics," drugs and nuclear power each at one. Ten student papers had been specifically prevented in the previous year from publishing articles on banned topics. Dodd (1982) published advisers' war stories, and one can only imagine how some students would have described

their experiences; one adviser reported "many conflicts" with adminstrators, another a principal who wanted no stories "that were negative in any way," and yet another who "feels he should review all controversial material."

But intimidated students and principals who resisted students' expression rights prior to the *Hazelwood* decision have not been the only problems. Interest in student journalism from professional journalists -- which was substantial from the 1930s to the 1970s based on their contributions to student journalism publications, conferences and contest judging -- has clearly slid; one unnecessary blow was the number of media companies and journalists who agreed with, or at least did not oppose, the *Hazelwood* decision (Dvorak *et al*, pp. 241-243). And the number of high school journalism teachers who are certified to teach journalism has not increased dramatically (Dvorak *et al.* [1994] reported only 28%); in states where the number of certified journalism teachers is low -- such as West Virginia (Arnold, 1980) -- newspaper staffs often have remained primarily social groups usually made up mostly or even entirely by female students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students are less interested in the kind of teamwork necessary to produce a newspaper, and teachers tell us that instead of yesteryear's intensive involvement in extracurricular activities by the best students, students today generally work at paying jobs or are "flaky" -- they lack the self-discipline to make or keep commitments.

All of this has taken a toll, but perhaps the most damaging development of all has been the combination of taxpayer revolts -- which has caused thousands of high schools nationwide to either charge extra fees for each extracurricular activity or drop many of them -- and a rechannelling of resources away from older vocational programs such as newspaper, home economics and "shop" classes, to computer programming, computer graphics, and computer everything else. (Ironically, some imply that use of computers may increase students' interest in working on student papers [Death by cheeseburger, 1994, pp. 125-131].) Two documents from 1993 and one from 1994 tell the net cumulative result of all of these changes: "Rescuing High School Journalism," a report of the ASNE Education for Journalism Committee; "Inner City High School Newspapers: An Obituary?" a paper by Mary Arnold; and Death by Cheeseburger : High School Journalism in the 1990s

and Beyond, a report by The Freedom Forum. In contrast, Dvorak *et al.*'s book, Journalism Kids Do Better (1994), is exhaustive in detail and makes an overwhelming case for scholastic journalism, and might have helped prevent the elimination of many newspapers if published 10 years earlier.

Death by Cheeseburger is the most insightful of these recent publications with regard to why some students work for student publications and other students read them. After reviewing 233 student newspapers, the Freedom Forum found that 37% of stories were on school events and news, 21% on sports, 18% editorials, 4% letters, 2% fiction/ poetry, 2% editorial cartoons, 1% cartoon strips, and 15% other. The percentage of papers carrying at least one story in various categories were as follows: movie/book/music reviews, 61%; all-school survey, 45%; student profiles, 42%; racial prejudice/relations, 26%; drugs/alcohol, 25%; family issues, 23%; college, 22%; AIDS/safe sex, 20%; Diet/nutrition/exercise, 19%; sexual harassment, 18%; fashion/dress codes, 18%; guns/violence, 18%; environment, 17%; trends, 16%; gay issues, 16%; dating, 14%; morality, 14%; spirituality/religion, 10%; gossip column, 9%; condoms/contraceptives, 8%; abortion, 6%; censorship, 6%; and suicide, 2%. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of student newspapers are shying away from the most controversial, yet pressing issues; this is especially true when one considers that the percentages of schools that forbid certain types of content in their papers ranges from a low of 16.9% in the West, to a high of 35.2% in the South.

Yet long-time student newspaper advisors and scholastic press association directors insisted that student newspapers in the 1990s have moved from "tamer school-oriented news in the '80s to a more in-depth handling of sensitive social issues in the '90s" (Death by cheeseburger, p. 10). This all depends on whether one sees the cup as half empty or half full.

At the end of Death by Cheeseburger, its authors and editors make 12 suggestions for improving high school student journalism programs. And yet, despite their otherwise enlightened report on scholastic journalism, they still never specifically ask or answer the question of why students work on student newspapers, or what typical students read in them and why; it is simply assumed that students work on student papers primarily or even solely because they plan to major in journalism in college and/or become professional journalists. Thus the full range of meanings of

students' role in their own newspapers remains in 1998, something of a mystery, and student newspapers' place in youth culture requires more research. It is hoped that this paper is a first step toward answering those questions.

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